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in the U.S.A.

An Historical Sketch of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the State of North Carolina

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AN HISTORICAL SKETCH

OF THE PROTESTANT EPISCOPAL CHURCH IN THE STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA

By

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IN this present year of our Lord 1906, the Rt. Rev. Joseph Blount Cheshire, Bishop of North Carolina, the Rt. Rev. Robert Strange, Bishop of East Carolina, and the Rt. Rev. Junius M. Horner, Bishop of Asheville, issued an address to the Clergy and Laity of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the State of North Carolina, commemorative of the two hundredth anniversary of the first recorded administration of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper which was celebrated in the then colony, now State of North Carolina. This by their desire was read aloud in the churches throughout the State on Trinity Sunday, June 23d. We find the evidence in Hawk's History of North Carolina, and in the Colonial Records. Gov. Clover in a letter to Henry Compton, Bishop of London, says: "The Reverend Richard Marsden, waiting here for passage to South Carolina, thought it convenient to administer the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, which is the first time I can learn of its being administered in this poor county: this was done on Trinity Sunday, 1706."

The church history of our beloved State dates, however, much further back, and it is with deep pleasure and pride that we recall the fact that on the shores of North Carolina was celebrated the first ser-

vice of the Anglican Church held in what now constitutes the territory of the United States.

The first colony of Sir Walter Raleigh landed on Roanoak Island in 1584. Three years later, August thirteenth, Manteo, the Indian chief of a neighboring tribe, the first convert, was baptized, followed a few days later by the baptism of Virginia Dare, the first white child born in America of English parents.

Although the fate of this unfortunate colony is shrouded in mystery the seed there planted and apparently lost, later on took root and has greatly grown until the present, when within the borders of our State we have the Diocese of North Carolina, the Diocese of East Carolina, and the Missionary District of Asheville, a large number of communicants, much church property, a growing church with an ever spreading influence.

In 1701 the Assembly passed an Act for the maintenance and support of the church, but it came to nothing. The first church building of which we have record was commenced in 1702 and stood near the present town of Edenton. It was small and primitive and has long since disappeared. In the same year Dr. Bray, a commissioner of the Bishop of London, sent the first minister into the colony. Dr. Bret brought with him a collection of books, which presented to the town of Bath, constituted the first public library in the State. He himself remained only a few

months. What subsequently became of his books is not known.

In 1704 the "Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts," sent a missionary, the Rev. Mr. Blain, and others from time to time, until in 1770 there were eighteen clergy in the colony.

With the possible exception of the church in Bath, the oldest church building now standing is St. Paul's in Edenton, which was begun in May, 1736. In this day of modern facilities and conveniencies we can hardly appreciate the difficulties and cost of constructing so substantial a building in that far off time.

The clergy of the English church had no certain establishment until 1765. Each incumbent was then annually allowed six hundred and fifty dollars by the province, and another hundred from the bounty of the London Society for the Propagation of the Gospel. They were in addition furnished a residence and two hundred acres of glebe lands. Also by law they were allowed fees for celebrating marriages and preaching funeral sermons. They were all appointed by the governors for the different parishes and were frequently in trouble with the Baptists and Quakers who resented being taxed to support an established church with which they were not in sympathy. There were eight regular clergy and two missionaries in the province at that time.

The war of the Revolution was disastrous in the extreme to the church. The clergy were in most instances loyal to the crown and so lost influence with their people. Churches and chapels were deserted and much property fell into the hands of others, a part of which has never been restored.

From this time until 1790 the church was almost extinct. In that year at the suggestion of Bishop White of ^{Pa}Virginia efforts were made to revive it. Meetings of clergy and laity were held in Tarboro in June and November, 1790, in November, 1793, and in May 1794. At this last meeting six clergymen (including one in Lutheran order) and a small number of prominent laymen were present. A constitution was adopted, Deputies to the General Convention and a Standing Committee were appointed, and the Rev. Charles Pettigrew was chosen Bishop. Mr. Pettigrew set out to attend the General Convention of 1795, but was prevented by a terrible epidemic of yellow fever from accomplishing his journey, and seems never to have felt able to undertake the work afterwards. Thus this effort to organize the church failed.

“In November, 1816, the Rev. Bethel Judd, of Connecticut and the Rev. Adam Empie of New York . . . met in Wilmington. Finding a church and a congregation they began to officiate regularly. In January the Rev. John Curtis Clay became rector of the

church in Newberne. On Easter Sunday, 1817, Mr. Judd re-organized a church in Fayetteville. These three clergymen, with delegates from their several parishes, and with one laymen from the church in Edenton, met in Newberne April 2nd, 1819, and organized the Diocese of North Carolina, requesting Bishop Moore of Virginia to take Episcopal oversight thereof. He consented to do so and in 1819, 1820, 1821 and 1822, made brief visits to the chief places in the Diocese, and presided in the Annual Convention. In 1823 the clergy numbered seven and the communicants four hundred and eighty. The Convention resolved to elect a Bishop."

The Rev. Wm. Green, the youngest of the North Carolina clergy, afterwards himself Bishop of Mississippi, placed in nomination the Rev. John Stark Ravenscroft, of Virginia. Mr. Ravenscroft up to the age of forty-five was a planter in his native State, had been ordained Deacon by Bishop Moore. He was personally known only to his sponsor, who, greatly impressed with his zeal and earnestness, spoke so eloquently in his behalf, that he was unanimously elected on the first ballot, April 12th, 1823, and on the 22nd day of May was consecrated the first Bishop of North Carolina. In his own words "he could only assert the true position of the Church and strike dismay to the hearts of her adversaries." He died in the seventh year of his service, March 5th, 1830, hav-

ing doubled the number of clergy and of communicants in his Diocese. His entire ministry from his ordination as deacon until his death covered a period of only twelve years. He died leaving a memory "which time has not effaced."

On May 21st, 1831, the Rev. Levi Silliman Ives, of New York, was chosen Bishop and consecrated the 22nd of the following September. He found in the Diocese fifteen clergy and eight hundred and nine communicants. During the early years of his ministration his zeal was great, most especially in the field of missions. His attempt to establish an Episcopal school for boys in Raleigh did not succeed, but out of the ashes of this effort sprang St. Mary's school for girls. Bishop Ives meeting accidentally, on the streets of New York, the Rev. Albert Smeedes, spoke to him of his desire to establish a church school for girls and suggested that Dr. Smeedes should come South and undertake the work. The buildings were ready, but no further assurance of support. Dr. Smeedes feeling the need of a milder climate had resigned from his former parish of Schnectady. He decided at once to follow out the suggestion of Bishop Ives and came to Raleigh almost immediately. Under his fostering care and able guidance St. Mary's grew rapidly. Her daughters have been untiring in their interest and energy and have been active church women in almost every state in the Union. Dr.

Smeedes, after carrying his school successfully through the dreadful days of the civil war, died in 1877, and was succeeded by his son, Rev. Bennett Smeedes, as Rector of St. Mary's. During the winter of 1889 and 1890, Bishop Garrett, of Texas, wrote to the Rev. Bennett Smeedes for information regarding his father's methods, "I find all over my diocese the beginnings of Sunday Schools and churches, the work of St. Mary's women, and am determined to establish a church school as the best means of building up my diocese. "Bishop Garrett's church school in Texas is therefore the direct result of Dr. Smeedes' work at St. Mary's. Bishop Ives also established a Mission School at Valla Crucis. It was very largely on account of teachings and practices said to prevail there that suspicions of his faithfulness to the church arose all over the diocese. "After several years of doubt and distress to the diocese and painful vacillation on the part of the Bishop, he obtained leave of absence and six months salary in advance in September, 1852, for the ostensible purpose of traveling for his and his wife's health. He went abroad soon after and on the twenty-second of the following December addressed a letter from Rome to the Convention of the Diocese announcing his abandonment of the church and his intended submission to the Pope of Rome."

Bishop Ives was succeeded by the Rev. Thomas Atkinson, Rector of Grace Church, Baltimore, chosen

May 28th, 1853, consecrated on the 18th of October of the same year. Almost immediately he won the love and confidence of his people and so prevented any unfortunate consequences which might have followed the defection of Bishop Ives.

The outbreak of the Civil War in 1861, made reorganization of the Churches in the Confederate States necessary. Bishop Atkinson and his clergy were very active in their efforts on behalf of the army and those left at home. Many of the clergy became chaplains of regiments. The Bishops and others who remained at home giving a part of their time to ministrations to the soldiers in camp and hospitals. Bishop Atkinson's true greatness of soul was shown in the disastrous years which followed the overthrow of the Confederacy. He, with his full delegation of clergy and laity and his nephew, Bishop Lay, of Easton then missionary bishop of Arkansas, attended the General Council in 1865, on which occasion North Carolina was the only Southern State represented. He met the delicate issues there presented, with such true wisdom, gentleness and firmness that the immediate reunion of the Southern and Northern dioceses was effected. The presence of Bishop Atkinson and his delegation made the terms of reunion not only so fair, but also so courteous, that the Southern Dioceses could not but return.

The position of the colored clergy and laity in North Carolina is also directly due to Bishop Atkinson. Since 1865 there has been no distinction made in the church between the white and colored ministers. In 1867 St. Augustine's Normal and Collegiate Institute, for the education of the colored race, was begun in Raleigh, largely through the efforts of the Rev. J. Brinton Smith, its founder. A Theological Department has since been added.

Bishop Atkinson founded in Asheville the Ravenscroft Mission and Training School for the purpose of spreading the church among the mountaineers and the training of candidates for orders. Though the school has not been continued, a number of clergy now in orders, begun their training there and the property then acquired through the generosity of a few citizens of Asheville, is still owned by the church and used for Church purposes. The possession of this property was a contributory cause of the erection of the Missionary District of Asheville.

Soon after the war, Bishop Atkinson finding his field too extensive for the labors of one man, suggested the division of the Diocese or that he be given an assistant. The Rev. Theodore Benedict Lyman, of San Fransisco, Cal., was elected Bishop Coadjutor and was consecrated Dec. 11th, 1883.

Bishop Atkinson passed to his eternal rest Jan. 4th, 1881, greatly beloved and deeply mourned by

the people whose wise counsellor, sure guide and devoted friend he had been in their days of darkness, trouble and adversity. So profound was the impression made on all classes, sects and creeds of the State that at the time of his death and for many years previous thereto, he was recognized as one of, and the equal to that triumvirate of great men, who so nobly and successfully guided North Carolina through the most trying epoch of her history—Atkinson, Graham and Vance.

Upon the death of Bishop Atkinson, Bishop Lyman succeeded him as full Bishop of the Diocese. Born at Brighton, near Boston, Mass., a graduate of the Theological Seminary in New York, in 1840, his first charge was at Hagerstown, Ind. In 1865 he was appointed chaplain of the American Legation in Rome. With the assistance of the Minister, Mr. Marsh, he held the first services of the Angelican Church which were allowed within the wall of the Papal City. Beginning in a hall of the legation, the congregation grew with such rapity that it was twice necessary to seek larger quarters. This attracted the attention of the Roman church. Cardinal Antenelli was sent to Mr. Lyman to say that his services must be discontinued. Mr. Lyman succeeded in obtaining an interview with the Pope and was granted permission to carry on his work. Thus organizing what is now St. Paul's Church, Rome. "He declined the deanery of

General Theological Seminary, New York City, to which office he was elected during his residence in Europe. He was called to Trinity Parish, San Francisco, Cal., where he remained until appointed Bishop Coadjutor of North Carolina.

The movement for division, begun in 1867 by Bishop Atkinson, was never allowed to altogether drop. In the Convention of 1883 it was carried by a large majority. The General Convention erected the new Diocese of Eastern Carolina, comprising the counties of Hertford, Bertie, Martin, Pitt, Greene, Wayne, Sampson, Cumberland, and Robertson, with all that portion of the State lying between the said counties and the Atlantic ocean. The Rev. A. A. Watson, D. D., rector of St. James' Parish, Wilmington, was elected the first Bishop, and was consecrated April 17th, 1884. "Bishop Watson was born in the City of New York, Aug. 21st, 1818, Graduated at the University of New York in 1837. Studied law and was admitted to the bar in 1841. After a year's successful effort he turned his attention to the sacred Ministry, and was admitted to the diaconate in St. Ann's Church, Brooklyn, N. Y., Nov. 3rd, 1844, by Bishop Onderdonk. Ordained to the priesthood by Bishop Ives, in St. John's, Fayetteville, N. C. The first fourteen years of his ministry were spent at Grace Chrch, Plymouth, and St. Luke's, Washington, N. C. In 1883 he became rector of Christ Church, Newbern.

At the breaking out of the Civil War he became chaplain to the 2nd Regiment of State troops. At the close of the war he was appointed assistant to Bishop Atkinson, then the rector of St. James' Church, Wilmington. In 1864 he succeeded to the rectorship and continued in this post until elected to the episcopate. He received the doctorate in divinity from the University of North Carolina in 1868. He was a member of the standing committee of the diocese and a deputy to the General Convention for many years. He was consecrated in his parish church at Wilmington, April 17, 1884. Bishop Watson was a well read theologian, a scholar of rare ability, probably the most accomplished and capable canonist in the Church, and a man of the highest culture. He was at once revered and beloved, and his administration was attended with a marked development of the spiritualities and temporalities of the Church under his care."

The new diocese took from North Carolina 21 clergy and 2809 communicants. Leaving to North Carolina 55 clergy, including the Bishop, and 3080 communicants.

In 1886 Bishop Lyman was appointed to the care and jurisdiction of the American Episcopal Churches in Europe. In the same year the Reverend E. A. Osborne obtained permission of the Bishop to undertake the establishment of an orphanage in the Diocese. Some years before the Reverend Benjamin S.

Bronson, for many years rector of St. Perters, Charlotte, had purchased a farm of about eighty acres in the neighborhood of that city, hoping to establish a boys' school. The greater part of the money used for the purchase was given by the widow and family of the late Lewis Thompson of Bertie county. The school was given up after a few years. Mr. Bronson, who had charge of the property, agreed to transfer it to the church for an orphanage, to be called the Thompson Orphanage, provided Mr. Osborne would take charge as superintendent. The formal opening took place May 10th, 1887, with ten little children. The work is supported by Guilds in the several congregations, by individual offerings, and by collections in the churches throughout the State on Thanksgiving Day. It has grown rapidly, the buildings have been enlarged, and their number increased until now about seventy children are provided for. The dining hall and dormitories, costing something over twenty-five hundred dollars, were built as a memorial to Bishop Atkison. The funds for this addition were procured through the effort of Miss Rebecca Cameron of Hillsboro, and the children of the State as "Messengers of Hope." Two other memorials have been added, Bronson Hall, built with current funds and a few generous individual donations, and the beautiful chapel of St. Mary the Virgin, the generous gift of Judge W. P. Bynum, a memorial to his wife and

daughter. In May, 1898, Mr. Osborne resigned the Superintendency of the Orphanage and was succeeded by Reverend Walter J. Smith, who is still in charge.

“The institution is doing a great work. It has trained quite a number of highly respectable men and women, whose happy and useful lives bear witness to the value of the work and to their appreciation of what has been done for them.”

In the spring of 1892, St. Mary's School celebrated her semi-centennial. The alumni gathered from far and wide. Bishop Lyman, assisted by Dr. Smeedes, Dr. Marshall, rector of Christ Church, and other clergy, officiated at the solemn services held in Christ Church, Raleigh, as the beautiful chapel belonging to the school was too small to seat the many interested participants.

Bishop Lyman died Dec. 11th, 1893, at the age of seventy-eight years. The Diocese had grown greatly under his administration. He consecrated about forty churches. The Convention met in Raleigh June 27th, 1893. The Rev. Joseph Blount Cheshire, Jr., rector of St. Peter's, Charlotte, was elected to succeed Bishop Lyman and was consecrated Oct. 15th, 1893.

Bishop Cheshire is a North Carolinian by birth and descent, tracing his ancestors in the State to the earliest colonial days. He is deeply learned in the theological and secular history of the State, and is the

author of a number of extremely interesting and valuable historical sketches. During the term of his Bishopric, St. Mary's has become the property of the Church. Dr. Smeedes, deciding that he could no longer carry the diocese's financial burden of the school, the three dioceses of North Carolina, and the church in South Carolina, determined to buy the property and continue the work. By act of the Legislature, March 2nd, 1897, the school was incorporated. It was reported at the last Convention that through means of persistence and untiring effort, the final payment had been made. The property is now owned exclusively by the Church. Dr. Smeedes died Feb. 22nd, 1899, and was succeeded by Dr. Bratton of Spartanburg, S. C., now Bishop of the Diocese of Mississippi. He in turn was succeeded by the Rev. Mr. McNeely DuBose, rector of Trinity Parish, Asheville. Rev. Mr. DuBose still has this work in charge, and under his efficient administration the school has greatly grown in numbers and equipment.

In October, 1895, the General Convention erected the Missionary Jurisdiction of Asheville, dividing the State of North Carolina for the second time. The first Convention was held in Trinity Parish, Asheville, Nov. 12th and 13th, 1895. The Jurisdiction which by act of the General Convention, shortly after changed its name, and is now called the Missionary District of Asheville. It consists of the counties of Alle-

ghany, Wilkes, Alexander, Catawba, Lincoln, Gaston and all that portion of the State lying west of these and at the time of division contained twenty-two clergy, about fifteen hundred communicants and fifty-four congregations. Bishop Cheshire was requested to continue his episcopal oversight thereof with the title of "Bishop of North Carolina in charge of Asheville." Three years later the Rev. Junius Moore Horner, associate Principal of Horner's School, Oxford, North Carolina, a graduate of Johns Hopkins University, and of the General Theological Seminary, in New York, was chosen Bishop of the District and was consecrated on Holy Innocents Day, Dec. 28th, 1898, in Trinity Church, Asheville.

In 1904, on account of the increasing feebleness of Bishop Watson, it was considered advisable by the Convention of East Carolina to appoint an assistant. The choice fell upon the Rev. Robert Strange, at that time Rector of St. Paul's Church, Richmond. He was consecrated on All Saints' Day, Nov. 1st, 1904. Bishop Watson died April 21st, 1905, at the age 86 years, and was succeeded by Bishop Strange, as Bishop of the Diocese of East Carolina.

A graduate of the Theological Seminary, his first charge was the Church of the Good Shepard, Raleigh. He was called to St. James', Wilmington, and from there to St. Paul's Church, Richmond. Born in Wilmington, the important events of his life have been

connected with St. James Church. He was baptized, confirmed, ordained and consecrated there, which, as Wilmington is the Episcopal City of the Diocese, gives him a peculiar nearness to his people.

At the last meeting of the Convention of North Carolina the Diocese was reported to contain 54 clergy, 5462 communicants and 101 congregations.

The Diocese of East Carolina, as last reported had 28 clergy, 4228 communicants and 73 congregations.

The Missionary District of Asheville reports 30 clergy, 2438 communicants and 76 congregations.

